

Virtual Care & Telemedicine

At Sunnybrook, we strive to deliver the right care, at the right time, in the right place, through the right channel, and according to patient choice and needs.

In many instances, care offered virtually can provide a better experience as patients can save time and money accessing care in a more comfortable environment (e.g. virtual patient education, follow-up care, and group sessions).

However, **virtual health care is not a substitute for all in-person care. Sunnybrook practitioners must ensure care is offered and accessed equitably -- irrespective of age, race, gender, ethnicity, income, ability, and geography.**

Sunnybrook has a new policy that outlines the appropriate steps to offer virtual care in a safe, private, and equitable fashion. Please take some time to review Sunnybrook's [virtual care policy](#).

Updated: November 2021

Understanding Virtual Care

» What is virtual care?

Virtual care allows you to speak with your patients or clients using a telephone, smartphone or your computer. Patients or clients do not need to come into the hospital. Sunnybrook and other teams across the province have been using virtual care through the [Ontario Telemedicine Network](#) (OTN) for many years. At this time, virtual care options may also include other videoconferencing technology such as Zoom.

While Sunnybrook's approach to virtual care emphasizes patient choice and clinical appropriateness; at this point in the pandemic, however, the hospital holds a strong preference for virtual care when possible, as there are still limitations on our capacity to provide safe in-person care.

» Is my patient appropriate for virtual care?

Virtual care is not for everyone. In some cases, an in-person visit may be more appropriate. Consider the following questions when deciding if you should provide care to your patient virtually:

1. Does your patient have physical, cognitive or sensory impairment?
2. Does your patient have either a desktop computer, laptop computer, tablet or smartphone with a webcam, microphone, and speakers/headphones?
3. Does your patient have an email address or indicates they know how to register for one?
4. If you're the answer to the above questions is no, you may want to consider a telephone or in-person appointment.
5. Does your patient have a language barrier? If yes, is a family member able to interpret?

» Webinars and additional resources

- [Sunnybrook physician webinar](#) (April 21, 2020)
- [Sunnybrook admin assistant webinar](#) (May 20, 2020)
- [Sunnybrook physician webinar #2](#) (July 8, 2020)
- [OntarioMD: virtual care webinars](#)
- [University of Toronto: virtual care resources](#)
- [Sunnybrook virtual care policy](#) (November 2021)
- [Patient Experience in Virtual Care - Rotman Leadership Project](#) (ppt)

Virtual Care Platforms

» How do I sign up for the Ontario Telemedicine Network (OTN)?

The [Ontario Telemedicine Network](#) offers two-way videoconferencing and advanced information communication technologies to deliver examinations, treatments, clinical, education and administrative services to more than 360 urban, rural, and remote health care sites throughout Ontario. Patients are able to connect with providers at Sunnybrook or elsewhere through secure videoconferencing located in another health-care centre (known as telemedicine studios), or through their personal computers at home.

Physicians: Obtain a ONEID account by logging into the CPSO member site and complete an application.

Non-physicians: Obtain a ONEID account by contacting [Valerie Sutherland](#) to set-up a time for the identity validation process so that it can be created. The following information will be required:

- Legal name
- Preferred phone number
- Preferred email address
- Professional designation and registration number, if applicable (for example, RN, Physiotherapist, etc.)
- Please identify any delegates aside from the clinician who will be scheduling appointments.
- Sunnybrook ID badge

Once you receive the ONEID Login and temporary password you will then need to log into [this website](#) to change your password and update your profile.

1. Go to [OTNHub.ca](#) and sign-up through "Express Sign-up" under Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre.

2. Visit [OTN Training Centre](#) for resources to help you get started using direct-to-patient video visits

» I am a medical trainee. Can I use OTN?

Yes. Trainees may sign-up for an OTN account through the "Express Sign Up" option on the OTN registration page using their existing ONE-ID account. Virtual visits can be booked under your account, with the staff physician invited as a third guest. For trainees without an OTN account, virtual visits can be booked under the staff physician, with the trainee invited as a third guest. Trainees who wish to initiate the visit in the absence of the staff physician may do so through the Host URL and Host PIN. The staff physician may then join using the guest URL. For clinics where staff and trainees are providing simultaneous care, virtual care modalities can be mixed and matched to optimize efficiency, for example:

- OTN with telephone
- OTN with Zoom
- Two OTN visits can occur concurrently, as long as appointments are separated by at least 5 minutes

» When should I use an OTN studio?

Patient Telemedicine Sites/Studios (Outside of Toronto)

OTN allows patients to connect with providers at Sunnybrook through secure video conferencing located in another health care centre outside of Toronto. These centres are open and willing to accept patients following COVID-19 directed screening protocols. An OTN video visit might be an option for you and your patients in the following circumstances:

- Consultation requires clinical/nursing support, such as checking vitals. Peripheral devices such as high-resolution hand-held cameras are available to be used for close-up images of skin lesions, burns, joint and gait assessments.
- Patient is an in-patient in another hospital
- Patients do not have reliable internet access
- Patients do not have compatible computer technology (e.g. no video camera)
- Patients are not comfortable using their own computer technology

The connection to these studios can occur from the personal computer videoconferencing technology, as well as the room-based systems.

Sunnybrook Corporate Studios located at Bayview Campus, M1600 and M1608

Any Sunnybrook health care professional can consult from either of the two corporate studios with their patients presenting from patient site studios outside of Toronto.

The rooms are equipped with room-based video conferencing technology with large screens, a document camera, and Sunnybrook computers, fax and phone lines. For assistance with securing the use of the Sunnybrook studios, please contact Valerie Sutherland by [e-mail](#) or at 416-480-6100 ext. 7380.

» How do I schedule an OTN consult?

OTN consults are scheduled through [OTNHub.ca](#). For assistance with securing the use of the Patient Site/Studios, the Sunnybrook Corporate Studios and scheduling processes, please contact Valerie Sutherland by [e-mail](#) or at 416-480-6100 ext. 7380.

» How do I use Zoom?

1. **Create a Zoom account:** Health-care licenses are available to Sunnybrook staff, free for a limited time. If you are interested in registering, please contact the [L.S. Help Desk](#).
2. **Schedule "Meetings" (appointments):** With [Zoom](#) open, click "Schedule a New Meeting" and complete the form (description not required).
 - Ensure both the video and audio is on (checked) for both the host (you) and the participant (patient)
 - You may wish to require a meeting password for added security
 - Save your meeting settings.
3. **Share Zoom appointment with patient:** Once you save your meeting, a summary page will show-up.
 - Add the appointment to your own Outlook calendar
 - Select "Copy Meeting Invitation" and paste the information into an e-mail to the patient.
4. **Connect to your appointment:** Open your browser, [login to Zoom](#) and start your meeting from the list of meetings (see "Meetings" in left menu bar)
 - If you added the meeting to your Outlook calendar, you can click the link to launch the meeting.
5. **End your appointment:** When your appointment is over, click "Leave Meeting" on the ride side of the Zoom video menu bar. Then, select "End meeting for all" to close the meeting for all participants.

Preparing for a Virtual Care Appointment

» How do I document consent for virtual care?

A discussion regarding the limitations of virtual care, including potential privacy concerns and limitations to treatment should occur between the health care provider and the patient ahead of the appointment or at the time of the visit. Patients can be directed to [sunnybrook.ca/virtualconsent](#) for further information. Documentation of consent should be recorded in the patient chart. As of May 1, 2020, the Virtual Care note type is available in SunnyCare for all health-care providers to use; it contains pre-populated text pertaining to patient consent for virtual care.

- Consent should be obtained and documented at the first virtual visit (including email encounter).
- At subsequent visits, clinicians are encouraged to re-obtain consent for virtual care and ensure both the practitioner and the patient are located in a safe and private location for the virtual encounter.

- Documentation should include the mode of visit (e.g. phone, video) and who attended (e.g. patient and spouse on speaker phone.)
- For patient-initiated contact, consent is implied. Documentation of implied consent is not required.

» How can I help prepare my patient for virtual care?

Please direct your patients to sunnybrook.ca/virtualcare. This website offers answers to frequently asked questions, information on consent and privacy, as well as a helpful checklist so they can prepare for virtual care and make the most out of their appointment.

» What if my patient has a language barrier or other impairment?

If your patient has a cognitive or sensory impairment, consider involving family members, caregivers or community health-care providers in the virtual visit to help facilitate. For any language barriers, please consult [Sunnybrook Interpretation Services](#). Other accessibility options to help meet your patient's needs could include TTY phone, telephone consult, or using the "chat" feature on a virtual platform.

» What other electronic forms are available to help with virtual care?

- Bloodwork: [Generic Bloodwork Requisition](#) (fill-able PDF): can be e-mailed or mailed to a patient, or faxed to LifeLabs at 905-795-9891. This generic bloodwork form is also accepted at the Sunnybrook lab.
- Medical Imaging Request: Visit [Sunnybrook.ca/medicalimaging](https://sunnybrook.ca/medicalimaging) for referral forms
- [Consultation Request](#)

» How does SunnyCare support virtual care?

As of May 1, 2020, the Virtual Care note type is available in SunnyCare for all health-care providers to use. It contains pre-populated text pertaining to patient consent for virtual care.

Another helpful tool is the SunnyCare Prescription Writer. This allows you to electronically generate prescriptions for printing or auto-faxing. Check out the [FAQ](#), [quick video](#), and/or the [printable pamphlet](#) for more information.

» Can I send and receive fax through my e-mail?

Yes. Sunnybrook's [FaxServer](#) allows users to send and receive faxes from their e-mail. To get started, contact sbiscallcentre@sunnybrook.ca with your fax number and cost centre.

During a Virtual Care Appointment

» Are photographs / screenshots or recordings allowed?

If you, as a provider, wish to record or obtain photos of the participants during the virtual visit, consent must be obtained as per section 2.0 of [ADM-0050 Privacy and Security of Personal Health Information](#) identifying purposes for the collection of personal health information. If verbal consent is obtained, it should be documented. Specify if verbal consent is accepted here.

If a patient wishes to record the virtual visit, the patient must seek consent from the provider and all participants for recording and identify the rationale for the recording.

Health-care providers setting up the virtual care session should ensure that the settings function for participant recording is disabled in advance, to prevent patients from recording the session without consent. allows you to speak with your patients or clients using a telephone, smartphone or your computer. Patients or clients do not need to come into the hospital.

» What should I do if the patient has a fall, injury or acutely ill during the visit?

As appropriate and based on the clinical information you may have, you may suggest to the patient or a family member present to seek medical attention by going to the nearest emergency department, or calling 911.

In the event that a capable patient declines your advice to seek emergency care or to share this information with the next of kin, health-care providers should document the interaction in the patient's health record.

If the patient is not capable of understanding and appreciating the risks of not seeking medical attention due to pre-existing cognitive issues or an acute change in status during their virtual appointment, for example, providers should use their judgement and call 911 or next-of-kin as needed. Be sure to document all actions taken in the patient's health record.